

VOLUME THREE

A CAMPAIGN OF HOPE

Recovering the Hope
We Are Meant to Have!

Rise up, O saints of God!
From vain ambitions turn;
Christ rose triumphant that your hearts
with nobler zeal might burn.

Commit your hearts to seek
the paths which Christ has trod;
and quickened by the Spirit's power,
rise up, O saints of God!

Speak out, O saints of God!
Despair engulfs earth's frame;
as heirs of God's baptismal grace,
HIS WORD OF HOPE PROCLAIM.

— *Norman Furness*

Volume III: CAMPAIGN

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Postlude



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WHAT MUST THIS CAMPAIGN PROCLAIM?

His Supremacy Is Our *Message of Hope* to the Church

“Please give me my *special thing!*” came the appeal of each child from the bedroom.

All through their growing up years, one by one Robyne and I would tuck in our children by whispering to each a single sentence — one simple benediction uniquely designed for each child. “My special thing” they liked to call it. Built on the root meaning of their first and middle names, each blessing reflects our sense of their destiny as followers of Christ. How I cherished my nightly “daddy” routine with Adam, Bethany and Benjamin, each adopted from India.

Benjamin (which is Hebrew for “son of the right hand”), for example, has the middle name of “Dheeraj” (Hindi for “prince of courage”). Putting them together formed my special thing for him. Snuggling up close, I would say: “God is making you to be a courageous follower of the Son at His right hand.”

Thus, every day ended for them with a *message of hope* — a promise personalized for each child, anticipating a tomorrow shaped by nothing less than Christ’s supremacy. Night after night we encouraged our little ones to

delight in their calling in Jesus which is now how they approach life as adults. (Today, incidentally, Benjamin is doing urban missionary work, courageously sharing the Son every day with others.)

Surely, planting hope toward the Lord Jesus within another human being is one of the greatest ministries we can ever have, beginning with our children.

On a grander scale throughout the ages God Himself has spoken a myriad of “special things” to His children. As suggested earlier there may be as many as 7,000 separate promises in the Word of God. Each one is focused on establishing the preeminence of God’s Son. Accordingly, each promise can help to “color in” any full-orbed message about Christ, not only for unbelievers but for Christians as well. That message will be the central contribution of the “Campaign of Hope” discussed in the next four chapters. This campaign is one mission desperately needed *inside* the Church.

This chapter catalogs some of the unparalleled “special things” God invites us to share with each other — a vision that can cure any crisis of supremacy. We will:

- **Survey the makeup of the “Message of Hope” we’re called to proclaim to each other.**
 - **Identify the impact such a message can have on our hope and passion toward Christ.**
 - **Apply our findings to a Campaign of Hope throughout the Church.**
 - **Uncover characteristics of people who actively promote this message.**
 - **Explore how you can know if you are ready to serve in a Campaign of Hope.**
 - **Show why we must do so in *prayer* — first of all and through it all.**
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Proclaiming Christ: Our Message of Hope

(2 Thessalonians 1:5-12)

Listen to a widow of September 11 as she addressed a national conference in Philadelphia shortly after her young husband died in a Pennsylvania field on

Flight 93: “After the hijacking I was left with a choice: Either living with fear or living with hope. As a follower of Christ I could only choose hope, hope in Him.” Despite unspeakable tragedy this sorrowing saint offered to other believers a message about an “abounding hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15). She proclaimed to Christians that hope does not just fix its sights on the next few days or years, as important as that is. In the final analysis true Biblical hope encompasses a *Person*. It exalts in the triumphant consummation of all things in Him, when death itself will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15).

While multitudes may see only a hopeless end to their existence, Christians proclaim *an endless hope*. We become a people *alive* in hope. For us the true meaning of current events (even tragic ones) lies largely in the Grand Finale and in the Son of God who will reign undisputed at the End.

That’s why our message about the Lord Jesus Christ, especially to each other as believers, must remain indelibly marked by a spirit of *hope-filledness*. It should exalt the One whose role is to rule in the Church as “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1), so that we become a people passionate for “Christ Jesus, our hope” (1 Tim. 1).

The instincts of this 9/11 victim (and of others, like my friend Lori) were to reach out to fellow believers to help them exchange *their* burdens of hopelessness with a life-restoring vision of hope in Christ. That day her love for Christ caused her to take up her own Campaign of Hope. She forced the issue of the supremacy of Christ to come to the forefront for her hearers to help them grow into disciples gripped by hope in Christ.

All of us are called to this same mission. Christians not only *pray as if* all God’s promises were true; we not only *obey as if* greater triumphs in Jesus are yet to come; but we also can *speak as if* our Message of Hope is the greatest gift we can offer another believer. To fully love the saints is to take them captive to the same hope in Christ that grips ourselves. Only to the degree the Church first is flooded with proclaimers of Biblical hope will we, in turn, truly feel compelled to share it with unsaved neighbors and unreached nations.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

The world dreams of progress, power and of the future. Disciples meditate on the End, the last judgment and the coming Kingdom. To such heights the world cannot rise.

(DIETRICH BONHOEFFER)

THINK WITH ME ...**How does our message stack up against other “hopes” the world talks about?**

At the opening of the 21st century the nations witnessed a barrage of pre-meditated massacres of epoch proportions. Muslim extremists sought to annihilate resistance to their radical Islamic utopia. In doing so they were willing, for Allah’s sake, to become martyrs — “suicide bombers” — and take a host of innocents with them.

By contrast, a very different vision occupies center-stage in the Church’s mission to the nations. The hope the Gospel unleashes can feel *wild* sometimes (as Tom Sine suggests) — provocative, unfathomable, unpredictable, uncontainable — reflecting characteristics of the One who encompasses hope on both personal and cosmic levels. Biblical promises boast blessed benefits that Mohammed’s followers never dreamed of. Our message is not about utopian revolutions of human fabrication. It is, instead, about a life-giving, liberating *Person* who is destined to consummate the whole universe *in Himself*.

To be sure, our hope — like theirs — is based on blood. But it is not the

QUOTABLE QUOTE

Does Islam — or any other faith besides Christianity — cherish the crucifixion of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, as the only ground of our acceptance with God? The answer is no. Only Christians “follow the Lamb” who was “slain” as the one and only Redeemer who sits on the “throne” of God (Rev. 14:4; 5:6; 7:17) ... The closer you get to what makes Christianity ghastly, the closer you get to what makes it glorious.

(DR. JOHN PIPER)

blood of fanatical martyrs out to destroy the enemy at any price. Ours is the blood of a Surrendered Servant whose fanaticism (if we may call it that) was displayed by His substitutionary *sacrifice*, given to spare and redeem His enemies. Suffering, not violence, provides the irrefutable argument for *His right to rule*. The Bible testifies: “ ... that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, things in heaven and on earth, making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col. 1).

None of the Bible’s “big picture” talk of hope makes any sense apart from the *Cross* of Christ. As we noted earlier, hope in Christ’s supremacy is empty apart from hope in His sacrifice. Every message we proclaim to one another as Christians as well as to earth’s unreached peoples must retain

the Cross at its heart to remain a legitimate heralding of *hope*, or to boast any lasting effect in raising up a people of hope. The entire book of Revelation is superintended by the *Lamb* of God (Rev. 5 onward). The Cross has become for all time the greatest display of Christ's supremacy we will ever experience! That's why it always dominated the New Testament's "Message of Hope" even when — and especially when — delivered to believers.

In his memorial eulogy for seven astronauts lost in the 1986 explosion of the space shuttle Challenger, President Ronald Reagan suggested that even in dying they had "broken the bounds of earth" and "touched the face of God". Then he went on to say of their sacrifice: "The Challenger crew was pulling us into the future, and we will continue to follow them." In a similar way every facet of who Christ is pulls us onward. To adapt the President's words, Christ is, in Himself, the Face of God. He is also the One to whom belongs a future of phenomenal blessings. Because of His willingness to *die* to get us there the lives of Christians are saturated with the promises and purposes of God.

Christianity is "*good news*" — even more, it is the *best* news! — because it is *great* news about a great *future* shaped by God's everlasting purposes through a great Savior. The major difference between Islam (or any other world religion) and true Christianity impinges on this scope of the hope Christians claim and proclaim. In Christ God offers believers every possibility intended for His creation. In Christ every degree of "newness" designed to last forever has been brought to us, fully. Christ encompasses in His very being everything we long to receive *from* God as well as everything we long to become *for* God. Both. All the Father's promises are stamped with one resounding "Yes!" to us because the Father has appointed a person — His Son — to bring them to completion *for* us (2 Cor. 1). He alone inhabits, and then happily shares, His inheritance with those who surrender by faith to Him as Lord of all (Eph. 1).

This is a "Message of Hope" the world can't possibly match.

THINK WITH ME ...

How did Paul proclaim Christ as the great "Message of Hope" for every Christian?

A few years ago the Bryants relocated to metropolitan New York City. Within a week families living around us welcomed us to the neighborhood with a party. The whole group was quite intriguing. Scores of their members moved into the area 20 years earlier from other parts of the Northeast to

establish proximity with each other as members of a denominational renewal community. They call their fellowship the “People of HOPE”. As they reached out to us, we observed something quite unusual about their ministry to fellow Christians. Theirs was not a “hope so” approach to life, nor just a “hope for” vision for renewal. Rather, it was a “hope in” relationship with Jesus. For them hope was a noun far more than a verb! For them hope was a *Person* dwelling in their midst. Loving us in very tangible ways, they made Him that much more personal for us as our hope, too.

Where did this vision come from? For them and for all Christians the apostle Paul is a key source. His writings on Christ take us to the pinnacle of Christian hope and give us the heart of every “Message of Hope”. No other Bible author does a better job of capturing the supremacy of God’s Son. Harnessing dozens of superlative phrases, Paul describes God’s Son with a cascade of choice characteristics. Consider a few:

- “everything under His feet”
- “above and beyond”
- “fulfillment of the times”
- “fullness of the Godhead”
- “surpassing glory”
- “every spiritual blessing”
- “above all rule and authority”
- “Him who fills all in all”
- “all things summed up in Christ”
- “the power to bring everything into subjection to Himself”
- “in Him be all glory, throughout all generations, forever and ever”
- “when He comes to be glorified in His saints”
- “brought life and immortality to light”
- “firstfruits of those who sleep”
- “every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”
- “the Blessed Hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”

Can you imagine someone being foolish enough to nominate any other name in all of history or from any nation to receive the praises these phrases require we give except the name of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Can you imagine any figures of renown, whether historic or mythological, coming close to matching the person painted in Paul's great Christological texts? I'm thinking of Ephesians 1, Colossians 1, Philippians 2, Romans 8, Galatians 3, and I Thessalonians 4, among others. What a collage of claims. What a panorama of promises. What other personality in the universe, past or present, could ever begin to compete with the Kingdom role Paul attributes to the Lord Jesus Christ? Not even founders of great world religions would dare to compare themselves with the picture penned in such passages.

After studying Paul's take on Christ over many years, I never cease to be amazed at the regal rainbow of truths he uses to exalt our Lord. He does it in a way unparalleled in any other literature, secular or Christian. Each phrase explodes even for *Christians* (Paul's primary readership) the borders of their preconceived notions about what lies ahead. Each phrase pushes *Christians* into new frontiers of expectations toward Christ. Each phrase leaves no doubt that because Jesus reigns, God has much more for His people than we have yet experienced. As Paul puts it in Ephesians 3, by the power of Christ in His Church God will do "exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond all that we dare to ask, or even think ... throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

A Biblical vision of God's Son, not only from Paul but from the rest of the New Testament (see *Appendix V*), results in a "Message of Hope" that is both *abounding and apocalyptic*. Understanding these two dimensions of our message can help us appreciate why proclaiming the supremacy of Christ to one another must become our central strategy for confronting and curing the crisis of supremacy. So, let's look at each one for a moment.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

To moderns drowning in hopelessness, disappointed, disillusioned, despairing, emotionally isolated, bitter and aching inside, Bible truth comes as a lifeline, for it is future-oriented and hope-centered throughout. The hope that the Scriptures brings us arrests and reverses the drowning experience here and now, generating inward vitality and renewed joy, and banishing forever the sense of having the life choked out of us as the waves break over us. The Bible throughout is a book of Hope.

(DR. J. I. PACKER)

THINK WITH ME ...**Why should our message about Christ point Christians to an *abounding* hope?**

Because it is embodied so fully in God's risen Son, Biblical hope is automatically "abounding", as noted in Paul's benediction over the Church at Rome (Rom. 15): "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Christ, so that you may *abound* in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (vs. 13).

Abounding hope means we rejoice over blessings still waiting to be unleashed even before we see them (Rom. 5). Our hearts are so possessed with God's love for us that we renounce the fear He might somehow fail to fulfill what He has promised us (vs. 5). We celebrate a God who longs to empower us in Jesus way beyond our boldest prayerful projections (Eph. 3:20-21). He wants to surprise us with awesome deeds of righteousness that become, at the same time, hope for all the ends of the earth (Ps. 65:5). He offers to show us great and unsearchable things which we have never seen before (Jer. 33:3). He wants us to experience times when he does "awesome things that we did not expect" because "no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him" (Isa. 64). So we pray for the understanding of this hope to grow and enlarge throughout the whole Church (Col. 1:3-6, 23).

According to 1 Peter, abounding hope is God's gift to everyone born again into a *living* hope by Jesus' resurrection from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). Abounding hope is possible only when there's resurrection hope. Abounding hope sets its sights on promises of even greater grace up ahead (vs. 13). Hope abounds because the life we now share with our Lord constitutes only the beginnings of a harvest of cosmic proportions just before us! Abounding hope anticipates a future as bright and bold as the coming Day of Triumph itself. The Bible says it is by this very hope we are saved, hope in Christ and His ultimate victories (see Rom. 8:24 in its context). Urged on by the Spirit's prayerful groanings for the consummation of everything, Christians join all creation in its "eager expectation" of liberation "from its bondage to decay [as it is] brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-21).

Peter assumes that such hope will become so visibly compelling — so *obviously* abounding — that non-believers will eventually become curious enough about it to actually ask us about it (1 Pet. 3:15-16)!

Abounding hope comprised the 18th century life-motto of William Carey, the father of modern Christian missions. Before leaving England to serve the cause of Christ for 40 years in India, he coined his motto one afternoon in 1792 while exhorting a delegation of Baptist leaders in Northhampton, England. Speaking before the crowd of weary clergy, the young man shared a vision of the Lord Jesus taken from one of Carey's favorite prophecies, Isaiah 54:

Enlarge the place of your tent ... do not hold back ...
You will spread out to the right and to the left;
Your descendants will dispossess nations ...
For your maker is your husband –
the Lord Almighty is his name ...
He is called the God of all the earth.

Coupling Isaiah's vision with similar passages from other prophets, Carey preached to his elders about a Lord whose reign must extend to the ends of the earth as well as to the End of time. His treatise proclaimed an exalted Christology, which he restated on the spot into a motto to justify his bold mission vision.

*Expect great things from God.
Attempt great things for God.*

A new British missionary society grew up around William Carey's motto. Organized then and there by some of the leaders who heard him that day, the society sent him on his way and in subsequent decades launched many others to pursue "great things" for Christ around the world. Scores of other societies followed in its wake.

But here's the rest of the story. Carey's vision for the victorious reign of Christ never ceased restoring ministry resolve. Abounding hope gripped his heart, pressing him forward in outreach through four physically draining decades in the withering heat of Calcutta. It sustained him even when three of his children died of tropical diseases; when his wife went insane, requiring years of endless care-giving; when his financial support in England disappeared over minor disputes about missionary policies; even when fire destroyed his printing press outside Calcutta along with nearly twenty years of Bible translation work.

And this same hope, based on a vision for the greatness of Christ's Kingdom, revolutionized the mindset of Carey's contemporaries, too. In

fact, before he died in Serampore, India, in 1834, Carey's high view of the Redeemer effectively inspired hundreds of Christian young people from many nations to volunteer for service in Christ's global cause. What an abounding, reproductive, life-giving hope was his!

Standing one afternoon in quiet meditation by William Carey's overgrown gravesite just outside Calcutta, I reflected on his story. It struck me that over four decades of extraordinary missionary service his

QUOTABLE QUOTE

So then, God has not abandoned man to a meaningless prolongation of his existence on the earth. History makes sense. By announcing the good news of the End, we are calling people to prepare for the climax of history, when God's judgments will be poured out on all of us.

(DR. ARTHUR GLASSER)

accomplishments could be explained only by his vision of Christ (as his writings affirm). Carey saw Christ as *superior* to every hope he held dear (worth more than all of God's promises put together). He saw Christ as *sufficient* for every hope he held tight (ensuring the outcome of all of God's purposes). Christ was *sovereign over* every hope Carey could name (shepherding God's kingdom to perfect fulfillment). Christ was the *summation* of every hope Carey could claim (reigning over God's eternal plan until someday it reaches culmination). Therefore, Christ was Carey's *supreme* Message of Hope to the Church (and to Hindus as well). Carey's was an *abounding* hope throughout his life and ministry.

THINK WITH ME ...

Why should our message of Christ also point Christians to an *apocalyptic* hope?

Scholars call certain sections of the Bible, such as Isaiah 2 or Joel 3 or Malachi 4, *apocalyptic*. This is especially true of whole books like Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation which dramatize radical, though at points enigmatic, visions of the future. Each seer addressed a people caught in hope-draining circumstances. Ezekiel spoke to war captives, Daniel to fearful exiles, John to persecuted Christians. Apocalyptic messages were meant to expose God's people in graphic detail to ways God's sovereignty guaranteed the fulfillment of God's purposes for them.

The very word *apocalypse* is taken from the Greek word translated as the title of the Bible's concluding book: Revelation. It means to *unveil* in wholesale fashion, to *reveal* dramatically or to *dazzle* by open displays of

God's power and glory. What a rousing vision the writers delivered to hurting hearers then, and to an anxious generation now! Lifting up key universal themes about God's Kingdom, they took believers to the Throne of Heaven. By painting word pictures with "apocalyptic" colors the prophets shared striking snapshots that, on our side of the Ascension, take us straight to Christ as our hope.

One of these "Messages of Hope" adorns a main wall in the United Nations headquarters in New York City. Inscribed there is the dramatic reversal of despair proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah, chapter 2:

They will beat their swords into plowshares and
their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.

Isn't it curious that even the remote prospect of an era of international "shalom" has galvanized ambassadors from every part of the world to labor for global peace? If only they would recognize and embrace the supreme Uniter-of-Nations who alone can bring Isaiah's vision to pass. If only they knew that already Christ is in charge — King over the UN, King over the G8, King over NATO, King over the International Monetary Fund, King over the Arab League. If only they realized that already He has ascended on high, the Lamb slain and crowned to be the one and only *hope* of individuals and nations. If only they understood that one day the promise of Isaiah 2 (and hundreds of other verses about the consummate hope) will be brought to pass when every tongue confesses in unison that God's Son is supreme over all, for ever and ever (Phil. 2). The language of Isaiah 2 only makes sense in the light of Christ's supremacy. It will never come to pass amidst the clamor of General Assembly debates or UN peace-keeping forces. Isaiah's anticipated outcomes require the Regency of Jesus, the primary theme throughout most of his other prophecies.

What about us as *Christians*, though? What if *we* lived daily with such apocalyptic visions? What difference would it make for the Church as well as the nations? If *Christians* would urge each other to expect *foretastes* of the Kingdom to come, what glories of the Son might God reveal afresh to our

QUOTABLE QUOTE

All of us need to be aware of how Christ is moving in the midst of His Church toward the end of all things, and equally aware of our deep and immediate intimacy with Him. The one who dwells in the midst of His church is bringing closure to our present age. We cannot help but have a strong sense of living at the edge of the final consummation. We breathe the very air of the impending Kingdom.

(DONALD MOSTROM)

cities and communities? If Christians would start proclaiming to each other a Biblical vision of victory in Jesus — stirring up inside our churches a determination to live for nothing less than the Empire of the Son — would not the task of world evangelization take major strides forward?

THINK WITH ME ...

How did Jesus transform churches with a message about abounding, apocalyptic hope?

Pressing for abounding hope — and, above all, apocalyptic hope — was how our Lord Jesus ministered to struggling churches in chapters 2 and 3 of John’s Revelation. We studied this in another chapter, but notice again: He focused on seven local congregations scattered across Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) that were struggling, each in its own way, with a true crisis of supremacy — whether due to heresy, or persecution, or lethargy, or pride. They all needed a fresh Message of Hope to cure their crisis. And that’s what the Savior came to give them.

First, He invited them to sample an “appetizer” of the climax of God’s purposes by reintroducing them to *Himself*. He walked among them (as the seven letters from John record) revealing that He was heir to the Throne, center of the universe, ruler over creation and keeper of keys to the outcome of history. His message to them was not so much about “last things” as it

QUOTABLE QUOTE

The Church of Christ bears witness to the end of all things. It lives from the end, it thinks from the end, it acts from the end, it proclaims its message from the end ... Christ is the new, Christ is the end of the old ... Therefore, the Scriptures need to be read and proclaimed wholly from the viewpoint of the end.

(DIETRICH BONHOEFFER)

was about “*ultimate* things”. Jesus let the seven churches glimpse previews of His coming glory, of how they would see Him in the Consummation. They did not have to wait for the End. They could start benefiting from the impact of the End already — they could become what He called “overcomers”.

Despite differing circumstances, each congregation had the same basic need: a Message of Hope to renew resolve to live for His glory, no matter what. In the rest of John’s masterpiece Jesus amplified that message. Chapter by chapter our Lord revealed to them waves of wonders, confirming all that His supremacy held out to them not just later but *now* — and yet in ways, right now, that foreshadowed what *would* come later.

Does Jesus have any less of a Message of Hope for His Church today? Do we inherit any less certainty about His supremacy than what He gave to the Christian movement in 1st century Asia Minor? Can *our* churches presume to adequately serve Him unless this all-consuming, apocalyptic vision of our Lord possesses us, too? Should the Message of Hope we spread among our own people be any less bold and visionary regarding the preeminence of our Redeemer than what He gave to Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis or Philadelphia?

THINK WITH ME ...

How often do our churches hear a message about Christ that sounds like *this*?

Reflecting over the last few pages, ponder these questions: Is *this* the truth about Jesus to which most of our contemporaries have been converted? Is *this* the magnitude of the work of God's Son we hear consistently proclaimed in our churches? Are *these* the marvels of the person of Christ we talk about with each other every chance we get? Is *this* the majesty of our Redeemer by which we summon each other to pour out our lives with increasing devotion to Him? In other words: Is this the Message of Hope proclaimed inside the Church?

In all honesty, and with broken hearts, we must confess that far too often it is not.

Thankfully, more and more Christian leaders are discovering the shortfall, willing to admit how many of our people do not know Christ in these fuller terms. They sense a major catastrophe in the making. Lately I've heard an increasing number warning us: A failure to resume proclaiming a more comprehensive Christology to one another as *Christians* will only allow the crisis to infect more of what we're doing.

We must no longer postpone mobilizing this "movement of messengers". Christians must choose to commit to bringing a fresh message of Christ and His supremacy to other Christians right where they live. The tragedy is this (as church history verifies): If we don't act, the gulf that currently exists — the one between the majesty of God's Son and the evangelical church's loss of hope and passion toward Him — will only grow wider and more ominous.

To our everlasting encouragement, however, I hasten to add: Among a significant core of disciples, especially within the younger generation, has appeared renewed hunger to feast on deeper Biblical teaching about the

 QUOTABLE QUOTE

What does the Lord offer in the gospel? Is it not first Christ, and then all the benefits of Christ? The Lord Jesus Christ must be received in His whole mediatorial office, as Savior and Lord, as Prophet, Priest and King.

(THOMAS SHEPARD — PURITAN PASTOR)

glorious greatness of Jesus. More than ever I hear the cry of Christians to be mentored by leaders who refuse to settle for shallow solutions to the crisis. Many are asking to be led into fuller encounters with Christ's glory. They also want to be equipped to proclaim the wonders of His reign to others.

Which brings me back to my original recommendation: The time is at hand to mount a campaign within the Church to reconvert the people of God back to the Son of God for all He's worth — to recover all the hope we are meant to have in Him. Frankly, there is no other choice.

A “Campaign of Hope” That Proclaims a “Message of Hope”

(Psalm 68:1-3, 11, 18, 34-35)

I'm talking here about a genuine, all-out campaign — a campaign for the glory of Christ; a campaign to restore hope and passion toward Christ; a campaign that involves each of us as *proclaimers*. We must set about the task of delivering to *fellow Christians* a radically reformed (though thoroughly Biblical) Message of Hope. And we must do so without delay.

Consider how a campaign started to unfold when the Son of God walked among us.

THINK WITH ME ...

How did the supreme Proclaimer of hope shape His “campaign”?

The Gospels document extensively how Jesus carried out His own version of a Campaign of Hope. From the moment He went public He ministered as a “Messenger of Hope” to multitudes who followed Him.

I'm thinking, for example, of the day He preached His inaugural sermon at the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4). This was clearly a defining moment for

Him. He set the course for His public ministry with promises taken from Isaiah 61 with its heavy emphasis on *proclamation* by the coming Messiah. Let me quote from the Phillips translation in Lk. 4:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he anointed me
to PREACH good tidings to the poor;
He has sent me to PROCLAIM release to the captives ...
to PROCLAIM the acceptable year of the Lord.
(emphasis mine)

Notice Luke's choice of words: "good tidings ... release to captives ... acceptable year ... good news of the Kingdom." Hope, glorious hope, was Christ's central theme from the day He set out. A short time later in that same chapter Jesus added: "I must *tell the good news of the Kingdom of God* to other towns as well. That is my mission ..." about which Luke comments: "And he continued *proclaiming* his message" (all from Luke 4, emphasis mine).

Maybe no passage captures for us Jesus' life-message — the "manifesto" of His campaign — better than Mark 1:15. One might call this text "marching orders" for any Campaign of Hope. His proclamation can be boiled down to four dynamic declarations, each encouraging extraordinary expectations in the hearts of His hearers:

(1) "The time is fulfilled."

Jesus gathered to Himself all Old Testament promises focused on Messiah. In essence, His manifesto called everyone to get ready because God was prepared to act on His promises in order to revive, restore and re-deploy God's people for His purposes, according to His power through His Messiah. A new day had dawned with fresh hope for them ... and for us.

(2) "The kingdom is at hand."

Jesus announced that God alone in His sovereignty would carry out these promises for His people. Through Messiah's coming reign in their midst as well as among the nations God was poised to intervene in kingly power. He would do for them what they could never do for themselves. Jesus' manifesto announced the awesome expectation of a full manifestation of His supremacy. It continues to do so for us today.

(3) “Repent!”

Then, Jesus extended a call for conversion. The impending, extraordinary new work of God demanded it. His hearers were to renounce their best efforts to do God’s work in their own strength. They were to *turn from* all sin, all unbelief, all false hopes. Theirs was to be an unhindered involvement in what God was ready to do. In addition, He invited them to *turn toward* what was coming — to turn to the God of the future as well as to the future God held out to them. This remains the priority response to every Messiah-shaped Message of Hope today.

(4) “Believe this good news!”

Finally, conversion not only involved a turning toward God and His promises. It also included a response of proactive believing — more like seizing the Kingdom-hope for daily life and eternal destiny. Jesus encouraged *passion*. His followers must stake their very existence on this reality. Not only must they wrap their lives around Messiah and the good news of His supremacy. They also must be wrapped up in pursuing the full extent of Messiah’s reign. This same opportunity belongs to Christians everywhere right now.

Jesus’ campaign continued to unfold throughout the Gospels. Repeatedly He urged His hearers to embrace the joy of soon-coming displays of His Kingship, and to act accordingly. For example, two verses later in Mark 1 He spelled out to an audience of fishermen what a proper response would be to His message: “Come, follow me [passion], and I will make you [supremacy] to be fishers of men [hope]”.

 QUOTABLE QUOTE

Jesus Christ, by coming into this world, has changed the sunsets of time into the sunrises of eternity.

(CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRA —
3RD CENTURY)

Later He invited His disciples to something else — something more: to join Him in the very same Campaign of Hope. We see this on at least two occasions when He sent them out two by two (first the 12, and then the 70) to preach “The Kingdom is at hand”. Limiting their audience to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”, the campaign targeted those who considered

themselves inside the family of the redeemed. He defined these hungry believers as a “harvest” waiting to be reaped, and as scattered “sheep” waiting to be rallied back to the Chief Shepherd (Matt. 9 and 10). On Resurrection evening one of His initial encouragements to disheartened

believers was His promise: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn. 20). Then, forty days later, just moments before His coronation in glory, Jesus told the same group (along with as many as 120 others) that they would become His witnesses, beginning in Jerusalem. Ascended to His universal honor as Redeemer King, He commissioned them to proclaim the fame of His name, not only to the ends of the earth (the unreached), but — first of all — to those who called themselves the people of God (Jerusalem and Judea, as well as the splinter sect in Samaria).

Would he not desire a similar movement and message unleashed inside the Church today? Over the past 2,000 years, in fact, Campaigns of Hope shaped by the same priorities have arisen innumerable times. Let’s look at a few examples.

THINK WITH ME ...

How have multiple campaigns in the past impacted the advance of Christ’s Kingdom?

Why is the Christian movement currently eighty-three million times larger than when it began? What has turned the outward progress of the Gospel into the longest sustained human endeavor in history? One answer is that consistently God raised up a people full of Christ-exalting hope, and they wouldn’t stop talking about it — *first of all to each other*.

The Bible catalogs a veritable Who’s Who of promise-primed proclaimers to God’s people. The Old Testament sets before us Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Hannah and Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, David, Isaiah and Hosea, to name a few. The New Testament highlights Mary, Simeon and Anna, John the Baptist and John on Patmos, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, Peter, Paul and Timothy, among others. *All* were “Messengers of Hope”, trumpeting testimonies about bold breakthroughs from God as well as promised new beginnings in His Kingdom. Appealing to fellow believers to prepare for fabulous futures (especially in the least promising of times), they preached for saints to wake up to the power of God’s grace and the wonders of His ways. The goal was to set their hearts on both things above and things to come. But this kind of ministry didn’t end with the close of the New Testament.

As much as any church historian, Yale professor Kenneth Scott Latourette in his massive seven volumes on *A History of Christianity* detailed the impact of Biblical hope on the expansion of the Christian

movement worldwide. The pattern he uncovered reminded Latourette of waves crashing toward the shore with the incoming tide. Despite eras of spiritual recession, he noted, it would only be a matter of time before other “Messengers of Hope” surfaced in some segment of the Church to lead their own Campaigns of Hope in reinvigorating Christians with passion for Christ’s greatness and glory. Each time such efforts ushered in new epochs of Gospel advance among unbelievers.

In seasons of recession, Latourette noted, *hopelessness* would envelop parts of the Church, such as: when initial persecution drove believers into the Catacombs; when Christianized Rome was sacked by barbarians in 410; when the Black Death obliterated European churches in the 14th century, decimating whole congregations; when 20th century Christians endured a

QUOTABLE QUOTE

**Hail, gladdening light, of
his pure glory poured**

**Who is the immortal
Father, heavenly, blest,**

**Holiest of Holies, Jesus
Christ our Lord.**

**Worthiest art thou at all
times to be sung,**

**With undefiled tongue,
Son of our God, giver
of life, alone!**

**Therefore in all the
world thy glories, Lord,
they own.**

— OLDEST COMPLETE HYMN
IN EXISTENCE, FROM THE
3RD CENTURY, USED WHEN
FAMILIES LIT LAMPS AT EVENING

Cold War that threatened the very future of Christ’s mission with nuclear Armageddon. Yet in the midst of such times, hope in Christ continued to grip a host of believers. Their vision for His Kingdom moved them to action even in the darkest hours. As a result they transformed the course of nations for God’s glory. Sometimes these movements consisted of multitudes; sometimes of remnants.

But it wasn’t the size of the campaign that made the difference; it was the size of vision for their Savior in the midst of the campaign. Therefore, when persecuted Christians testified openly before pagans in the coliseums, many listeners came to faith. When Rome was sacked, the disaster provided the backdrop for Augustine’s revolutionary theology on the City of God, a work that permanently changed how much of the Church viewed Christ’s supremacy. During the plague when they faced death willingly in order to comfort the diseased,

thousands of priests in the Middle Ages ended up winning many to the Gospel. And, despite the specter of atomic holocaust, the 20th century saw the greatest numerical growth of the Church in 2,000 years as the word of Christ spread widely among the nations. These seasons of advance, took

place because truths about Christ and His Kingdom were freshly proclaimed. The message of His supremacy was heard again *inside* the Church. This resurgence of messengers ignited wholesale hope and passion toward the Lord expressed in movements of united prayer, waves of revival and renewal, sweeping social reforms and sacrificial missionary outreach.

The monastic orders that rose up during the opening centuries of the second millennium come to mind. Sufficiently convinced about Christ's ultimate triumphs, monks throughout Europe took redemptive action in education, medicine, ethics and the environment along with worship and evangelism. Similarly, a Kingdom-concerned message fueled the spread of the Reformation across a whole continent and beyond. This message re-appeared to inspire the tireless labors of William Wilberforce and the Abolition movement in 19th century England. It was a vision for transformation of prophetic proportions that invigorated the early days of the Civil Rights movement in America. In the midst of battling to secure Biblical justice for his people in the early 1960's Rev. Martin Luther King reminded fellow believers (and all of us with them): "At times, we must accept finite disappointments. But we must never lose the infinite hope God gives us in Jesus!"

Today, taken captive to the same Message of Hope, multitudes of Christians in Africa and Asia and Latin America have spawned some of the largest congregations in the world (such as a 700,000 member church in Seoul, Korea). Believers have sparked rapid church planting initiatives (like the thousands springing up across Indonesia) and fostered nationwide spiritual awakenings (as in the Fiji Islands where currently most political leaders are active confessing Christians), and propelled evangelistic movements unparalleled in church history (like the millions reportedly coming to Christ within the house church movement in China).

The current missionary-sending endeavors from Third World churches may be the greatest confirmation yet of the impact of Christ-saturated vision among God's people. From these churches thousands of laborers are being sent out by believers who live, in many cases, in abject poverty. Yet the missionaries' confidence in the supremacy of God's Son compels them to take risks for advancing the Gospel that most Christians in the West know nothing about. In India, for example, I've met with members of indigenous movements that have mobilized tens of thousands into prayer bands. Made up of individuals barely surviving on the equivalent of \$500 a year, these groups fast and pray all night once a week for their missionaries as they give

sacrificially to send them out to preach. Full of hope in Jesus, they are committed to evangelize unreached castes and tribes in other parts of their nation no matter what the cost. Many have told me personally they do so with an unhesitant conviction that, in the words of Habakkuk 2:14, India will soon “be covered with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”.

All of these case studies bring us back to the one key theme: When believers hear afresh God’s “exceedingly great and precious promises” in Christ Jesus (2 Pet. 1), many will find themselves *converted* to live in view of Eternity; *captivated* to pursue Jesus’ triumphs among the nations; *consumed* with passion for the praises of the Son; and *commissioned* to proclaim hope in Jesus at every opportunity, both inside and outside the Church. This pattern — converted, captivated, consumed and commissioned — can be replicated within any congregation where the supremacy of God’s Son is the Message of Hope they give to each other.

THINK WITH ME ...

Is it time for you to join in with a movement of proclaimers?

Restoring hope about Christ’s glory within the Church is a holy mission. God invites us to announce, declare, cry out, broadcast, trumpet, herald and publish abroad (all synonyms of “proclaim”) the wonderful person, purposes and promises of His Son *inside* the community of Jesus’ followers. Each believer can re-engage God’s original call on our lives: to become a community of *prophets* (compare Acts 2 with 1 Cor. 12, 14). Once more a movement of Christ-proclaimers can arise, spreading hope among one another and confronting the crisis that impedes spiritual growth and witness.

The stakes are high, especially in our witness for Christ to neighbors and nations. Only as we carry out a Campaign of Hope successfully *inside* our churches will Christians be able and willing to embrace wholeheartedly our mission to earth’s unreached peoples outside our churches (compare Isa. 60 with 1 Thess. 1). Paul writes: “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10). These words are the goal not only in missionary outreach. They are also God’s goal among His own people. He knows we can help the *world* really “get it” about His Son only to the degree that first *we ourselves* really “get it”.

Considering all that hangs in the balance, you might want to take a

moment right here to ask yourself: Do I personally know Christ *well enough* to present Him to other Christians *fully enough* to help them come back to Him for all that He is? Do I know how to speak to other believers about a vision of Christ that's *grand enough* to start healing their disappointments from the past and delivering them from daunting fears about the future? Am I so confident about Christ's total sufficiency for the heart-cries of the human soul that I am willing to exalt Him to fellow Christians without apologies every chance I get?

And, have I ever offered myself to the Father for this primary purpose: To be re-awakened by His Spirit to the greater glory of His Son so that in turn I can effectively invite other Christians to recover hope in Christ's supremacy and rediscover fresh passion for His Kingdom?

If this is the direction you're headed, eventually you may want to go back over chapters 1-5 where a lot of the "meat of the message" can be found for you to share with fellow believers. Also, plan to press ahead into chapters 10-12 where specific strategies for delivering the Message of Hope effectively are laid out. However, there is a *prior* step you need to consider. It is essential for all the rest: creating a Campaign of Hope based in a movement of *prayer*.

THINK WITH ME ...

Why do *pray-ers* of the hope often become the best *proclaimers* of the hope?

Unprecedented in Church history, across the Body of Christ today a prayer movement is exploding. Working with it over 25 years, I've come to one exciting conclusion: *This host of intercessors comprises potentially one of the most powerful armies of Christ-proclaimers the Church has ever known.* It certainly provides a prime recruiting ground for any Campaign of Hope.

Recent research indicates that nearly 200 million Christians worldwide are committed to praying for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom as a daily spiritual discipline. Over 40 million of these meet to do so in small weekly prayer groups. In other words, already many are waking up enough to our magnificent hope in Christ to set themselves in the pursuit of His purposes with determined desire for God to work. They have banded together, faithfully appealing to Heaven for major manifestations of Christ's supremacy in our generation.

In the process they are learning to *proclaim* their hope in Christ. They

do so every time they *pray* their hope in Christ. For them a Campaign of Hope has already begun — not on earth but in *Heaven*. Their requests are often reflective of the prayers in Paul’s epistles, such as his petitions for the Ephesians (consider both chapters 1 and 3). Paul, you’ll notice, hammered out some of his loftiest descriptions of Christ’s supremacy *as he prayed!* Similarly, as the 21st century army of intercessors starts proclaiming to fellow Christians the hope they’ve been praying about so persistently, the transformation will unfold quite naturally. Stepping from Throne Room into living rooms, they will be able to speak authentically to believers about a grander vision of Jesus because it was *that* vision — and their longing for a wide-scale awakening to that vision — that drove them to prayer in the first place.

Hundreds of praying Christians I know are already making this transition. In them the kaleidoscope of strategies outlined in the next three chapters — becoming Messengers of Hope, Prisoners of Hope and Vanguards of Hope — has begun to take shape. I can sense it every time they seek and speak about their hope in the supremacy of Christ. That’s why I suggest even a local prayer meeting may be the best starting point for a Campaign of Hope in your congregation or community. Let me end by illustrating from a personal experience.

THINK WITH ME ...

How might a prayer meeting become a starting point for a Campaign of Hope?

For years I was involved in one of three regular “prayer meetings” in my town. One meeting was made up of people caught up in Eastern religion — New Agers, often reciting monosyllabic mantras as they sat in a lotus position on the floor. Their goal? “Harmonic convergence” with the universe they called it. Another gathering consisted of hundreds of Muslim university students who convened at the local mosque every Friday, flat on their faces while reciting Koranic meditations (often Arabic prayers which I suspect most of them did not understand). Their goal? To reaffirm a worldwide Islamic brotherhood and to ensure continued favor in the eyes of Allah.

The third group, however, was profoundly different. This prayer meeting made up of a couple dozen Christians from twenty churches, assembled month to month, rotating from church to church. The way we prayed would have confused New Agers and offended Muslims. And it would probably have

baffled not a few fellow Christians if they had heard us.

You see, we had bought into Paul's superlatives. We agreed with what he taught about who Christ is as the Son of God, where He leads in the purposes of God and what He imparts as the Regent of God. In other words, we pursued God's Kingdom fervently. We learned how to pray back to the living God the hope recorded in His Word.

Gradually, praying like this started to reform our view of Christ. With increasing boldness we invited our Father to unleash Christ's reign more vividly in our lives, in the residents of our city (including Muslims and New Agers) and beyond. We prayed for revival throughout the Church and for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Our prayers incorporated expansive visions at times, but the requests were always rooted in the magnificence of our Monarch. Our prayers were rampant with great expectations. Our eyes were fixed on victories that would eventually transform Heaven and earth, but which had implications for our lives right now. Over years we prayed in anticipation of substantial interventions from Heaven — breakthroughs in our situations that would foreshadow the Consummation itself.

And we were not disappointed. We saw amazing answers — from personal spiritual renewal; to physical healings; to increased visible unity among believers in our town; to outreach to poor families of our community; to newly sent missionaries from our churches into other nations; to city-wide evangelism efforts that brought many to Christ.

Spoken in a thousand different ways, every prayer we offered was really one prayer. It echoed the last prayer of the Bible (Rev. 22). In all our gatherings one great heart-cry prevailed: "*Lord Jesus, come and reign among us.*" If I could tie up those hundreds of hours of prayer into one concise bundle of requests, here's a taste of what Heaven heard:

Come, Lord Jesus!

Come, ultimately, in the triumphs of Your victorious return.

***But until then come with similarly transforming power
even now, right where we live.***

Pour out preliminary experiences of Your supremacy.

Give us foretastes of what will some day fill Heaven and earth.

Focus us on Your worthiness as the Son of God.

Fill us with Your resources as the Regent of God.

Fulfill through us Your mission in the Purposes of God.

Fire us with Your zeal for the Glory of God.

By Your power, transform our lives, our churches and our city.

***Let Your people here become a showcase of your majesty
before the nations.***

***Do all of this in a way that approximates how Your supremacy
will be gloriously manifested when You are fully revealed
at the consummation of all things! AMEN!***

Three prayer meetings. Two were driven by empty superstitions and routine obligations. The third was driven by great expectations, mobilized around a Message of Hope defined by a Person who claims to be Lord of all.

But there was another demonstration of His lordship among us. Just as significant as the resulting answers to our prayers was what happened inside of each of us as we prayed — including what happened inside of *me*. Those wonderful years of hope-filled intercession profoundly *liberated* my whole walk with Jesus. They *fused* my heart with hope in Jesus. They enriched my passion for the Kingdom of Jesus. They *reanimated* daily discipleship with promises anchored in the majesty of Jesus.

Those seasons of prayer also recruited me to action for Jesus. They turned me into a Messenger of Hope. They motivated me to launch my own personal Campaign of Hope. How could I do otherwise? How could one pray like that — with such undeniable prospects for the revelation of Christ's glory — and not begin to proclaim to others a fresh Message of Hope in Him at every opportunity?

Eventually such prayers crafted in me a desire to spread the very vision of God's Son I was praying *about*, especially among those I was praying *for*. After all, Christians' waking up to Jesus for all that He is, is the ultimate answer to everything I ever sought from the Lord anyway. Offering myself to the Father to be a Christ-proclaimer gave me a way to help prepare Christian friends for the awakening when God grants it.

To this very hour I continue to keep both emphases together — praying and proclaiming, seeking and speaking. I pray my hope in Christ *to* God. Then I proclaim my hope in Christ *for* God.

Where We're Headed

Having watched her husband chart our nation's course through the stormy seas of World War II, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt once observed: "The most important word in the English language is 'hope' ". A half century later, looking back on his role in liberating his country from Soviet domination in the 1990's, Vaclav Havel, the first president of the Czech Republic, penned a similar conclusion: "I cannot imagine that I could strive for something like this if I did not carry hope within me. Life without hope is an empty, boring, useless life for sure." Both leaders discovered the revolutionary impact *any* message of hope can have on the course of men and nations. How much more should Christ's disciples expect radical results from proclaiming among God's people the greatest hope of all — the hope of Christ's supremacy!

Chapter 10 explores how to do this. It begins unpacking the strategies for a Campaign of Hope. How do we fashion and deliver a life-changing the Message of Hope inside the Church? What does it take to be a Messenger of Hope? I think the answers in the next few pages will encourage you a great deal.

